I

NEW MEMBER.

The following Member was sworn in :—

The ZAMINDAR OF KALLIKOTA.

II

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

[*Order made by the President of the Madras Legislative Council under Standing Order No.* 15 *on the 4th December* 1924.

1. Starred questions to be put at a meeting of the Council with their answers shall be printed and placed on the Council table an hour before the President takes his seat.

The President will call out the name of each interpellator in the order in which the names are printed, specify the serial number of his question and make a sufficient pause to give him or any other Member a reasonable opportunity of rising in his place and putting a supplementary question. Supplementary questions must be put immediately after the principal questions to which they relate.

2. If a Member responsible for a starred question happens to be absent when it is called, it will be open either to him or to any other Member to put supplementary questions thereon after the other starred questions for the day have been answered, provided question-time is not thereby exceeded.

3. Questions, not starred, will not be called in Council, but they will be printed with their answers and placed on the table of the House along with the list of starred questions. Oral supplementary questions will not be allowed in regard to unstarred questions.]

STARRED QUESTIONS

Excise

Prohibition of the sale of arrack and toddy.

*198 *Q.*—Mr. C. GOPALA MENON : Will the hon. the Minister for Public Health be pleased to state—

(*a*) the number of toddy and foreign liquor shops in the taluks in which prohibition of sale of arrack has been introduced at the commencement of the experiment and the years that have elapsed since then ;

(*b*) the consumption of toddy and foreign liquor at the beginning of the experiment and now ;

(*c*) whether any special report has been received on the working of the experiment ; and

(*d*) if so, whether the Government will be pleased to place it on the table of the House ?

A.—(*a*) The number of toddy shops in the five taluks before the closure of arrack shops was 62 in Shiyali, 99 in Tiruthuraipundi, 90 in Tiruvadanai, 40 in Tenkasi and 43 in Attur. There was one F.L. shop in each of the taluks of Tiruthuraipundi, Tiruvadanai and Tenkasi and none in the Shiyali and Attur taluks. About three years have elapsed since the commencement of the experiment.

(*b*) The Government have no information.

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(c) No special report has been received but the Commissioner has reported on the result of the working of the experiment in connexion with his proposals for the administration of Arrack Revenue for 1927-28.

(d) An extract [a] from the Commissioner's report so far as it relates to the experiment in question is laid on the table of the House.

Mr. C. GOPALA MENON :—" Sir, with reference to the answer to clause (a) it is said that three years have elapsed since the commencement of the experiment. I wish to know, Sir, the opinion of the hon. the Minister for Excise as to whether the preventive measures adopted all these three years have proved effective and fruitful."

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. AROGYASWAMI MUDALIYAR :—" I think so, Sir."

Mr. T. ADINARAYANA CHETTIYAR :—" May I ask the hon. the Minister, Sir, whether he has got any intention of extending or repeating the experiment after the 1st April 1927 ? "

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. AROGYASWAMI MUDALIYAR :—" The Commissioner's report has been placed on the table, Sir, and it shows that the Government are going to continue the experiment for another period of two years."

Mr. T. ADINARAYANA CHETTIYAR :—" Referring to the same report, it will be found, Sir, that as regards the Attur taluk in the Salem district, the experiment has resulted, at least distinctly during one-half of the year, in an increased consumption of foreign liquor. It is a well-known fact, Sir, that foreign liquor is a more deleterious drink than toddy."

The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" Please come to your supplemental question. Hon. Members when they put their supplemental questions are not allowed to make a statement prefacing the supplemental question."

Mr. T. ADINARAYANA CHETTIYAR :—" May I ask the hon. the Minister whether, in repeating the experiment, as he said he was going to do, he would close the foreign liquor shops along with arrack shops . . ."

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. AROGYASWAMI MUDALIYAR :—" Arrack shops have been closed, Sir, in the Attur taluk."

Mr. C. GOPALA MENON :—" In answer to clause (b), the reply is that the Government have no information; but at the same time, the hon. the Minister says that the experiment carried on has been effective and fruitful. We have not been favoured with any data as to the consumption of liquor in those taluks where these experiments have been carried on. Can the hon. the Minister enlighten us on that point ? "

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. AROGYASWAMI MUDALIYAR :—" The answer has been given with reference to the question of the illicit distillation and the increase in crime. We have no figures for the actual consumption."

Mr. G. HARISARVOTTAMA RAO :—" On a reference to the appendix, the hon. the Minister will find that in several places foreign liquor consumption has

[a] Printed as Appendix I on pages 213-215 infra.

increased and that toddy consumption has also increased in one or two instances. Does the hon. the Minister propose to close down the foreign liquor shops as well as the toddy shops, so that the experiment may have the full vigour of a complete prohibition ?"

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. Arogyaswami Mudaliyar :—" I think that is a question of future policy, Sir."

Mr. G. Harisarvottama Rao :—" I am asking a straight question, Sir."

The hon. the President :—" What action the Government propose to take may form the subject matter of a question and Government may answer it or may require notice for answering it; but on the ground that it is a question of policy, I do not think the Members of the Treasury Bench will be entitled to refuse to answer questions."

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. Arogyaswami Mudaliyar :—" I am considering the question of prohibiting foreign liquor in the areas in which we have prohibited indigenous liquor."

The hon. the President :—" Regarding foreign liquor, I think customs collected thereon is a Central subject; and if the Minister is officially connected with the subject and if it is a purely local matter, he may answer the question, or he may simply say that he will forward the question to the Government of India for necessary action."

Mr. D. Thomas :—" May I ask whether in view of the fact that the Tenkasi taluk in the Tinnevelly district adjoins the Travancore territory, the hon. the Minister would try the experiment in some other taluk of the Tinnevelly district ? "

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. Arogyaswami Mudaliyar :—" We have already started the experiment in the Tenkasi taluk and we have got to face some difficulties. We are trying to overcome those difficulties and we have also decided to continue the experiment there. On the whole, I think the experiments will have better results in the future."

Mr. T. Adinarayana Chettiyar :—" Sir, in the last paragraph of the appendix, it is said that 'the Assistant Commissioner reports that the people in the locality have personally complained to him about the closure of the shops.' May I know what sort of complaints they are and whether they are from the Abkari contractors ? "

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. Arogyaswami Mudaliyar :—" I have no information."

Mr. T. Adinarayana Chettiyar :—" Much will depend on the information, because it is generally the Abkari contractors that complain."

Mr. Abdul Hamid Khan :—" In answer to clause (*b*), the reply is 'Government have no information.' If it was the intention of the Government to reduce the consumption of toddy and foreign liquor, was it not the duty of the department concerned to keep an exact account of the consumption and the reduction thereof after the experiment was introduced ? "

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. Arogyaswami Mudaliyar :—" The talukwar details are not available, but if the hon. Member wishes, I shall try to obtain the information."

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Mr. J. A. SALDANHA:—"There is some misapprehension, Sir, as to whether the closing of foreign liquor shops is a transferred subject or not. My impression is that I put a question to the late Minister for Excise and he answered that out of six foreign liquor shops he had ordered five to be closed and that only one liquor shop remained. I want to know whether that one has been closed or not."

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. AROGYASWAMI MUDALIYAR:—"The hon. Member is right in saying that we have got the right of refusing licences to foreign liquor shops."

Mr. J. A. SALDANHA:—"Does that licence for one liquor shop still remain or has it been cancelled or has the shop ceased to exist? The licence was given for a year and by this time it should have lapsed or it should have been renewed."

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. AROGYASWAMI MUDALIYAR:—"May I know what shop he refers to?"

The hon. the PRESIDENT:—"The hon. Member is requested to state to which particular district the foreign liquor shop refers."

Mr. J. A. SALDANHA:—"In these five taluks, there were six foreign liquor shops for the sale of liquor. Out of the six, after repeated questioning and agitation upon my part, five were closed, and one lucky shop remained. I was given to understand that the licence for the sixth shop was only for a year. Now I want to know whether that particular liquor shop has been closed or whether the licence has been cancelled or whether it has been renewed."

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. AROGYASWAMI MUDALIYAR:—"I am unable to answer the question, Sir, for want of details. The question refers to prohibition of arrack and does not refer to foreign liquor."

Mr. G. HARISARVOTTAMA RAO:—"May I have an answer to my question, Sir? My question is whether it is the intention of the hon. the Minister to order the closure of foreign liquor shops as well as the toddy shops, so that the goal of total prohibition may be kept in view and so that the experiment may be tried under proper conditions."

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. AROGYASWAMI MUDALIYAR:—"The question of conducting a toddy experiment is under consideration and I am also considering, as I said before, the question of closing the foreign liquor shops."

Mr. A. KALESWARA RAO:—"May I know how much loss of revenue has occurred owing to this policy of closing the shops in any one taluk?"

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. AROGYASWAMI MUDALIYAR:—"No loss on the whole, Sir. I think the budget estimates show that last year there was an increase of revenue." (Hear, hear.)

Mr. K. R. KARANT:—"May I ask whether it is intended to have these experiments on a larger scale, and if not, why not?"

The hon. Diwan Bahadur R. N. AROGYASWAMI MUDALIYAR:—"We can only carry on the experiments in certain limited areas and not on a very large scale, Sir."